

## Child and Family Services Division Comprehensive Workforce Study Preliminary Findings - Summary

In total, 200 child welfare workers participated in this workforce study conducted by the University of Montana School of Social Work. The respondents were primarily female (83.15%) and young; over one third were under 40 years of age. The mean age was 44.9 years. This was the first full-time job in child welfare for 57% percent of respondents. Fewer than half held professional positions as supervisors, social workers, or teachers. Over 70% were direct care or clinical workers.

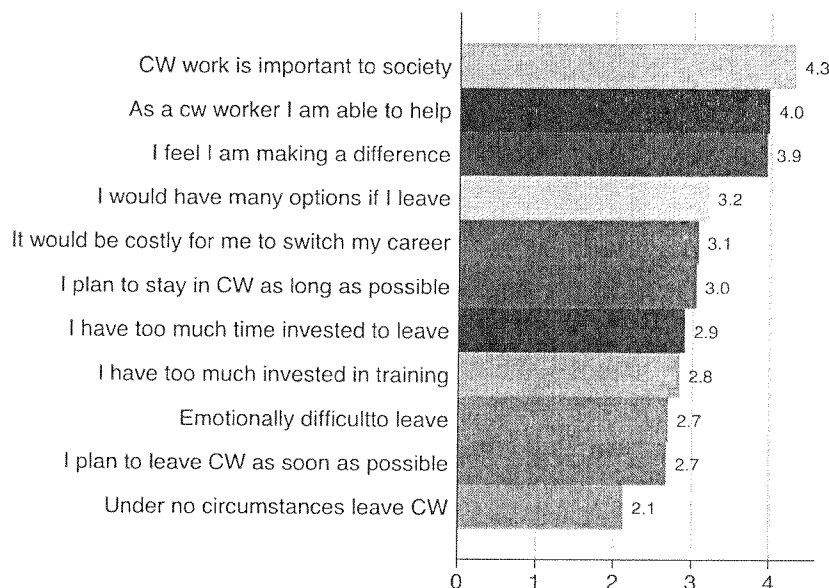
### Key Findings re: Attitudes toward Staying

Most participants (75.5%) reported that they had thought about leaving the agency in the past year (N= 151). However, it is important to note that 92.2% of the workers intended to remain in child welfare when asked the question "Do you plan to continue working in child welfare services?" On average, they estimated that they would remain in child welfare for 12.9 years (sd = 9.1). Overall, those who thought about leaving their agency were reasonably serious about this possibility: 86% had discussed this with their significant others, 81% had looked in the newspaper for job opportunities, 45% had made phone inquiries about job possibilities, 46% had sent out resumes, and 37% had gone on at least one job interview.

### Worker Commitment to the Social Work Profession and Child Welfare

Figure 1 displays workers' mean responses to questions on commitment to the profession of social work and child welfare. Each question is measured on a 5-point Likert scale with items ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 5 =Strongly agree. Higher scores indicate a stronger commitment to child welfare.

**Figure 1: Commitment to Child Welfare**

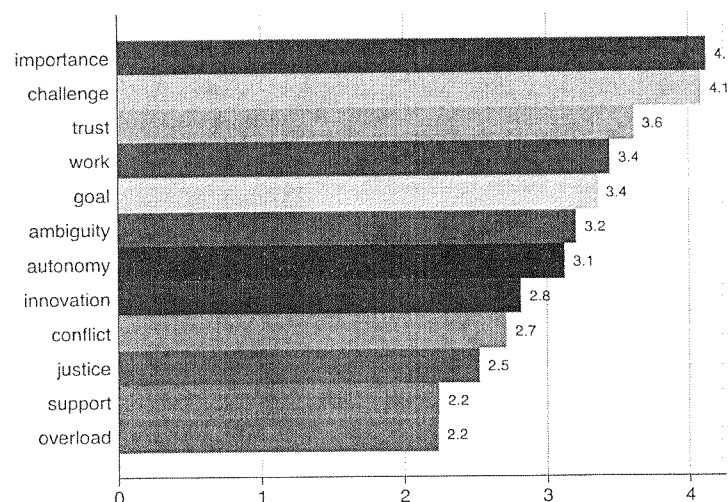


The last item ("Under no circumstances...") score was reversed during analysis; therefore, the lower score indicates greater intention to leave. As indicated by the following three items, workers identified with the mission of child welfare: "As a child welfare worker I am able to help," "Child welfare work is important to society," and "I feel I am making a difference in peoples' lives" all had relatively high mean scores. On the other hand, questions that measured their commitment and investment in the field were lower. For example, the mean response for "Under no circumstances will I voluntarily leave child welfare" was 2.1. Furthermore, the mean for the item "It would be emotionally difficult to change my line of work" was 2.7. Overall, workers do not have a positive view of their agencies, with only 39% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they would recommend their agency to others seeking employment.

### **Parker Agency Climate Scale**

To learn more about agency climate among this group, the survey administered the Parker Agency Climate Scale. This measure is designed to measure agency climate in human service organizations by assessing twelve aspects of climate: ambiguity, conflict, overload, importance, autonomy, challenge, innovation, justice, trust, support, goal emphasis, and work facilitation. It is a 48-item self-report questionnaire that uses a 5-point Likert scale with items ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree, with some items reverse scored. Each sub-scale can range from a low of one to a high of five. The mean scores for each subscale can be found in Figure 2. Overall, workers were most positive about the agency climate that supports that importance of the work done by the agency and least satisfied with the climate the creates an overload in workload.

**Figure 2: Means for Parker Agency Climate Sub-Scales**



### **Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS)**

82% of respondents were experiencing at least 1 symptom of secondary trauma (i.e. intrusion, avoidance, arousal). Furthermore, fifty percent of child welfare workers were meeting PTSD criteria on all three scales (intrusion, avoidance, arousal).